



Response to Notice of Formal Request for Information
House Public Health Committee
Interim Charge 3

Texas Gun Sense (TGS) is a nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates for common-sense, evidence-based policies that reduce gun injuries and deaths.

TGS has a position paper on suicide and suicide prevention on our website and pasted here.

The Need

Too many Texans die from suicide every year. The number and rate of suicides increased significantly between 1999 and 2018. Suicides are preventable. Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) laws and safe gun storage can reduce suicides.

Texans Dying from Suicide

- **Suicides** make up 62% of all firearm deaths in Texas.
- Nearly **three in every five** suicides in Texas are by firearm.
- **In 2018**, there were 2,263 firearm suicide deaths in Texas, including 143 children and teens (ages 0-19).
- The **gun suicide rate** in Texas is increasing. In 1999 the suicide rate per 100,000 Texans was 5.95 and in 2017 the rate was 7.62.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of **veteran suicides** in Texas in 2017 were by firearm according to the **Veterans Administration**.
- In 2018, the majority of gun **suicide decedents** were male (85%) and between the ages of 35-54 years old (30%).

More Information

- Suicide attempts are frequently an impulsive decision. Guns are very lethal means of attempting suicide—attempts by firearm result in death 85 percent of the time compared to just three percent for other common methods like drug overdose.
- Up to **80%** of people considering suicide give some sign of their intentions.
- Importantly, 90 percent of folks who attempt suicide do not go on to die by suicide. Thus reducing access to the most lethal means of suicide is key to saving lives.

Recommendations—There are smart policies to address gun suicide.

- Provide civil court judges with the ability to issue **Extreme Risk Protection Orders** (ERPO) when families or law enforcement provide clear and convincing evidence that an individual poses a risk of imminent harm to self or others. The temporary

orders would ban high-risk individuals from possessing or purchasing guns until their state of crisis passes. **Research** has shown the effectiveness of ERPOs in preventing suicide.

- Renew and increase funding for the **Statewide Safe Gun Storage Campaign** at the Texas Department of Public Safety. Safe gun storage denies or delays access to the most lethal means of suicide. People who report “firearm access” are at more than **three times the risk of suicide** compared to those who do not own or have access to firearms.
- Consider restricting gun sales during predictable circumstances of panic buying.

During the pandemic, Texans and others across the US have bought record-breaking numbers of guns and many buyers are first-time gun owners. Access to a firearm significantly increases suicide. Safe storage and handling of firearms helps prevent suicides and first-time buyers often do not have the safety information they need.

The committee must review every state agencies’ programs related to suicide and be sure that firearm safety is included. Too many policies do not even mention firearms or give only passing reference. Not including information on the means for the majority of suicides is dangerous and irresponsible.

Texas Gun Sense leads a group of advocacy organizations that have a key interest in guns and safety. I am happy to get information and feedback from the group.

Texas Gun Sense is happy to provide further information.

Thank you.